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SC No. 09688/67
25 August 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Preliminary Assessment of 21 August 1967
BLACK SHIELD Photography

Summary

The BLACK SHIELD mission flown on 21 August obtained photography of nearly all of North Vietnam north of the panhandle, including most of the high-priority surface-to-surface missile search areas, most of the serviceable airfields, about half of the SAM sites, and many US strike and interdiction target areas. No evidence of surface-to-surface missile deployment was noted.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Directorate of Intelligence.

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1. Mission 6716 on 21 August obtained photography of nearly all of North Vietnam north of the panhandle. Two passes were flown: the first covered the area along the Chinese border--including Pinghsiang and Lao Cai--and the second covered Haiphong, Hanoi and the region west of Hanoi. About 65 percent of the photographed areas were cloud-free. Hanoi was clear, but Haiphong was partially hidden by haze.

2. No evidence of surface-to-surface missile deployment was noted. The mission covered most of the high-priority MRBM search areas with the exception of an area north of Thai Nguyen and north and west of Yen Bai.

3. North Vietnamese air defenses: The mission photographed eight of North Vietnam's 11 serviceable airfields and one of two now under construction. No unusual activity was apparent on any of the fields with the exception of the roofing over of alert aircraft revetments at Phuc Yen, Gia Lam, and Hoa Lac airfields. The purpose of this roofing is not clear, but it does not appear to be of sufficient strength to withstand a bomb blast. It could be intended as a weather covering for the alert aircraft and crews and may also serve to protect the revetments from CBU pellets.

4. The air order of battle as shown in the photography is quite close to current official estimates with the exception of MIG-21s, none of which were in evidence on this mission.

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The MIG-15/17 tally of 21 aircraft on the DRV airfields and considered operational is very close to the official estimate, however, and the excess may be explained by the presence of UMIG-15 trainers which could be mistaken for MIG-15/17 fighters in an initial read-out.

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5. The photography showed 108 of the more than 200 serviceable SAM sites in North Vietnam. The number covered is somewhat lower than that of previous BLACK SHIELD missions, but an above-average number of occupied sites were seen. Current estimates place 25 to 30 SAM firing units in the DRV, 14 of which showed up on this mission. One of the 69 unoccupied sites appeared to have been constructed since the last BLACK SHIELD mission. The 25 remaining sites identified on the photography were not sufficiently clear to determine occupancy.

6. Bomb damage assessment of Hanoi power plant: The mission provided good coverage of the Hanoi electric power plant, revealing two hits on the generator hall by Walleyes during an attack on 21 August. The degree of internal damage is speculative but probably is limited to severe damage to one generating unit, possible damage to a second generating unit, and possible damage to one adjacent boiler. The plant could be out of service for a few days. Even with such damage, plant operation could be restored in one week to roughly one-half the installed capacity of 32,500 kilowatts--about the same operational capacity estimated for the past three months.

7. Transportation: The mission also provided coverage of much of the rail network in the northern part of the country, with the exception of the Kep-Thai Nguyen line. An initial scan of the film showed that the mission covered 18 bridges and 11 rail yards that are included on the CIA priority requirements list for bomb damage assessment. Current information on the status of the Hanoi railroad highway bridges over the Red River and the Canal des Rapides and serviceable by-passes was also obtained.

8. Chinese activity in North Vietnam: Two new storage areas with 42 dispersed buildings were identified at Lao Cai, showing that the Chinese engineers there are continuing to expand their construction activities.

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